



Industrial Corridor to Community Park: Brownfields Redevelopment in the Jordan Valley



Redevelopment of the Jordan Valley park, in progress

Springfield, Missouri

The Jordan Valley Corridor, a 300-acre, former industrial area in downtown Springfield, Missouri, was an underused stretch of land. Where factories and used-car dealerships once stood, there is now a 12-acre public park and an ice arena, with an arts center, an Exposition Center, and a minor league baseball stadium underway.

Over the last 150 years, there has been a variety of land uses throughout the Jordan Valley Corridor. As downtown Springfield expanded with an influx of industry and commerce, the demand for land grew. Factories and storefronts were built in residential neighborhoods, intertwining houses and industrial lots. As larger industries relocated to the outskirts of the city or neighboring cities and towns, smaller industries and businesses moved in, offering fewer jobs. Residents moved away from the area to be closer to new jobs and to avoid having a factory or used car dealership as their neighbor. Before long many of the factories, feed lots, lumber mills and car dealerships had relocated as well, leaving old, abandoned buildings in their wake with perceived contamination.

In an effort to address the vacant industrial corridor, community members and Springfield's city council set out to draft "Vision 20/20: Creating the Future," a plan committed to the area's revitalization. During focus group sessions and community meetings concerning the future of Springfield, it became clear that residents wanted a community park to call their own. City officials and members of the newly formed Citizens Advisory Council conceptualized Jordan Valley Park, which would serve as the starting point for redevelopment of the entire industrial corridor.

The project found its footing in 1999, when Springfield received a \$200,000 Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant from EPA. This grant provided the initial push by funding assessments on six of the twenty-eight properties acquired for the first phase of the Jordan Valley Park redevelopment project. Additional funds for the project were secured from the Federal Highway Administration, Economic Development Administration, and from many private contributors. Benjamin Alexander, Project Manager for the park, stressed the importance of the EPA's Brownfields Program, "We had a vision and a plan, but I don't think we would have been as successful as quickly without the Brownfields program."

The assessments revealed less contamination than expected, allowing for demolition of current buildings and redevelopment to start. In May

JUST THE FACTS:

- The Jordan Valley Corridor, a 300-acre, former industrial area in downtown Springfield, Missouri, had become home to abandoned former industrial and commercial sites with unknown levels of contamination.
- Environmental assessments of properties within the corridor revealed less contamination than expected, allowing for demolition of current buildings and redevelopment to start.
- The city celebrated the grand opening of Jordan Valley Park after the first wave of construction had been completed. In addition to new greenspace, the park features a public amphitheater, an arts center, a water garden, and a pedestrian trail providing access to and from central Springfield.

A \$200,000 Brownfields Assessment Pilot from EPA funded assessments on six properties acquired for the first phase of the Jordan Valley Park redevelopment project. Additional funds were secured from the Federal Highway Administration, Economic Development Administration, and private contributors. Benjamin Alexander, Project Manager, indicated that "We had a vision and a plan, but I don't think we would have been as successful as quickly without the Brownfields Program."

2002, the city celebrated the grand opening of Jordan Valley Park after the first wave of construction had been completed. New greenspace includes a civic park that mimics the topography of the Ozark Mountains; visitors can stroll along a dry streambed path and walk through the Ozark hills. The park also boasts a public amphitheater, an arts center, and a water garden that is enjoyed by all. The park is very accessible, as a pedestrian trail has been built to connect it with central Springfield.

The park has spurred a variety of new development in the area. In Fall 2002, the city opened the Jordan Valley Ice Park, a two-rink skating arena. As the new home of an North American Hockey League (NAHL) team and a local collegiate hockey team, the ice arena has become a popular attraction to hockey fans and ice-skaters. Also completed is the Creamery Arts Center, which became the new home of the Springfield Regional Arts Council. The new center is an historic 30,000 square foot building along the edge of the park. An expo center and parking deck opened in October 2003, and a privately funded baseball stadium is slated to open in spring 2004. A multi-purpose arena is in the design phase.

The city recently received notification of a new Brownfields Assessment grant from EPA and a Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI) grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. On September 23, 2003, which was designated Jordan Valley Resource Day, the Regional Administrator of the EPA (Region 7), James Gulliford, and the Regional Director of HUD (Region 7), Macie Houston, presented the City with ceremonial checks for the grants. The supplemental \$150,000 EPA Assessment grant will allow the City to continue assessing properties it acquires for Jordan Valley Park, and the \$1.2 million BEDI grant will secure an \$8.0 million HUD loan guarantee to redevelop two Brownfield properties, creating 117 jobs and creating 30 additional housing units. Jordan Valley Resource Day was created through a partnership between EPA, HUD and the city to bring state, federal and local funding source representatives together to see progress made and to discuss the role of each entity.

When this wave of construction is completed, more than 47 acres of Springfield's 300-acre industrial corridor will have been redeveloped. The construction of the Jordan Valley Park has also led to a surge in the restoration of buildings in the center of the city, including theaters and warehouse loft apartments. Springfield has become committed to redeveloping within city limits before growing beyond them.

Residents of Springfield could not be more pleased with the direction in which their city is heading. Community members volunteered nights and weekends during the planning stages of the park and now, the results of their labor are coming to fruition. The support that the first portion of redevelopment has received from community members and visitors has been overwhelming. City officials feel certain that the ultimate goal of redeveloping the 300-acre former industrial corridor will be possible due to the support of the community.

CONTACTS:

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Visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:

<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>



*Local residents enjoying the new
Jordan Valley park*